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# Land As Power: Pathways for Closing the Gender Gap in Land Rights in India

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**Land As Power: Pathways for Closing the Gender Gap in Land Rights in India**

**Rachel Lubitz**

**School for International Training**

This capstone paper is submitted for the fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute, DC Center in Washington DC, USA

Advisor: Davina Durgana

Date: July 9, 2018

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Student Name: Rachel Lubitz

Date: July 27, 2018

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms List

The following are key terms and abbreviations, and their definitions, utilized in this paper.

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### *Key Terms and Definitions*

**Mamlatdar:** Head of revenue administration consisting of average 50 or more groups of villages.

**Meghraj:** Town in the Aravalli district, in the Indian state of Gujarat

**Talati:** Village Accountant

**Taluka:** Administrative Division/District Office

**Varsai:** Inheritance Document

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### *List of Abbreviations*

**FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization

**FGD** Focus Group Discussion

**HDRC** The Human Development and Research Center

**KII** Key Informant Interviews

**MEL.** Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

**PLW** Paralegal Worker

**SBK** Swabhoomi Kendra Women's Land Ownership and Sustainable Agriculture Center

**SEWA** The Self-Employed Women's Association

**SMART** Sustainable, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Tangible

**WGWLO** The Working Group for Women's Land Ownership

**WLR** Women's Land Rights

**UN-SDGs** United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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## **Abstract**

This Independent Practitioner Inquiry Capstone sought to uncover whether women in their respective communities in India experience improvements in income, education, health, food security and their livelihoods, if said women farmers are able to secure the rights to both their land and other productive assets. The study used a comparative analysis to highlight the state of women's land rights in India, in conjunction with a selection of best practices relevant to the context and analyzing a case study assessing the impact of one organization's women's land rights efforts in particular: The Human Development and Research Center's Swabhoomi Kendra Center in Meghraj, India. The research used secondary and primary data collection methods, through a literature review highlighting linkages between women's land tenure security and improved social and economic outcomes. Additionally, interviews with stakeholders from The Human Development and Research Center's Swabhoomi Kendra Meghraj Center were done to gather further insight into the research. The research uncovered several findings: (i) patriarchal inheritance structures and spaces often obstruct women from realizing their land rights, (ii) while central and state governments have made progressive reforms to work towards gender-equitable land tenure security, gaps in implementation still exist (iii) there was an absence of robust, gender disaggregated land ownership data and (iv) despite these barriers, some notable practices have emerged as vital to the effectiveness of interventions. The paper will then shift into a reflection on insights and lessons learned, such as working to localize legal, infrastructural and institutional mechanisms, and prioritizing the collection of quantitative, gender-disaggregated data. The paper concludes with a discourse regarding recommendations, and the implications sustainable development practitioners should consider for women's land tenure security interventions throughout India.

## Introduction

Land is one of the most important resources for people in rural areas, the majority of whom depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Securing land rights means being one step closer to accessing productive assets, not to mention housing, improved food security and the ability to enhance one's political power and social status within their communities and their nations. Who benefits, however, depends on who within the household holds those rights. (Landesa, 2013). When men alone enjoy those rights, women and their children are often not able to fully reap the benefits. Studies show that “while over 70% of the world's agriculture is produced by women, and that many families are dependent on women managing these farms and bearing the major burden of family subsistence, only about 11% of the world's female farmers have secure rights to their land, and subsequently, the income they generate from their land. This phenomenon presents serious barriers for women creating the kind of livelihoods they envision for themselves, their families and their communities overall ” (Argawal, 2002). When women do gain land ownership rights, however, they are able to have more control over their own livelihoods. Research has shown that women tend to spend income they control on their families and their communities. They are *less* vulnerable to domestic violence, and are *less* likely to contract HIV/AIDS. They are also *more* likely to have a stronger influence in household decisions; to allocate a larger proportion of their household budget to food; to have better access to credit; to have children that are more nourished and have higher levels of educational attainment; and to participate in community level organizations (Landesa, 2013).

One nation that, while at the forefront of the women's land tenure rights movement, still has an extremely low percentage of women farmers owning land, is India. “86% of all *rural* female workers in India are in agriculture. If this is the case, it is quite troubling that only 13% of



women in India have titles and ownership over their land” (Argawal, 2002). Within this context, women are at the nexus of reconciling two systems- customary governance structures, and state-based land tenure systems. Moreover, the legal, economic, administrative and sociocultural factors influencing the issue must be analyzed, synthesized and integrated into any efforts practitioners or leaders put forth around supporting Indian women farmers in their fight for secure land rights.

As there is evidence to support that women’s land tenure security is an integral element to sustainable development, this study sought to uncover whether women in their respective communities in India experience improvements in income, education, health, food security and their livelihoods, if said women farmers are able to secure the rights to both their land and other productive assets. In supporting my research question, this Independent Practitioner Inquiry Capstone (IPIC) will be a comparative analysis of the women’s land tenure security movement in India, broken down into two major components. It will begin with a two-pronged macro-level analysis, comparing the state of women’s land rights in India, as well as best practices throughout the country through the thematic frames of research, advocacy, outreach and MEL. The paper will then narrow its analysis of some of the aforementioned practices through a micro-level analysis of the movement through a case study discussing one specific organization’s intervention surrounding the issue- HDRC’s SBK Meghraj Center. The case study utilized data collected from a 2018 field impact assessment, examining the effectiveness of the center’s efforts through a discussion of both qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions, as well as an analysis of quantitative data regarding SBK Meghraj member case statuses.

## **Literature Review**

### **Thematic and Technical Research**

There are a wide breadth of studies that provide evidence to support the theory that, when the gender gap in agriculture and land ownership is closed, a myriad of economic, health, social and environmental long-term benefits can be generated. In working to bring about these changes, women's land right practitioners have come to recognize these transformations can only occur if interventions integrate research, outreach, advocacy and MEL throughout their activities. Thus, the following literature review took a two pronged approach. It began with an examination of qualitative data, the connective relationships one should consider with women's land ownership rights and sustainable development through the lenses of economic security, health/community security and environmental security. In employing the security-based component of the literature review, it is worth noting that this paradigm was originally founded in human security theory. The concept of human security was first put forth by Mahbub ul Haq (a Pakistani development economist) at a United Nations Development Program Conference in 1994. Within the conference report, human security is defined as "the scope of global security that is expanded to include threats in the areas of economic security, food security, environmental security, health security, personal security, community security, and political security" (Speth, 1994, p. 24).

The salient points from the considerations sections discuss both the positive impacts that can occur from investing in women's land tenure security, as well as the potential digressive pitfalls a given society can experience if their rights are neglected or purposefully oppressed. The literature review then shifts into a discussion of a variety of research, advocacy, outreach and MEL activities that have been deemed as "best practices" across multiple sources of literature.

This review of sources for best practices in the field will serve as an introductory outline for both the rationale of the conceptual framework, and the results sections discussed later in the paper.

The purpose of this literature review was three-fold. To begin with, these findings provided evidence-based support of how helping women to secure their land tenure rights can lead to improvements in income, natural resource management, health and the overall livelihoods for the communities in question. Secondly, examining the relevance of sources where practitioners, scholars and researchers in the WLR uncovered notable practices served as a primer for properly synthesizing “best practice” results. Finally, the review highlighted potential gaps and insufficiencies in the research, flaws in methodology and the significant areas pertinent to future study, before shifting into the study’s overall purpose and rationale.

### **Environmental Security Considerations**

The Journal of Conservation Letters’ article *Incorporating Land Tenure Security into Conservation*, states that “land use pressures are increasing dramatically in recent years, owing primarily to increasing market integration, a growing consumer class, urbanization, and tremendous growth in demands on natural systems” (Robinson, 2017, p.2). These manifestations of globalization, along with a lack of strong representation, make it highly difficult for many rural female farmers and land dwellers to effectively cultivate and protect the ecosystems they depend on for their livelihoods. It is for this reason that legislation and interventions designed to conserve ecosystems and ensure sustainable use of natural resources should explicitly address both local peoples’ land rights and gender issues. Local communities, and women in particular, have specialized knowledge, traditions and self-interest that, often times, make them the most efficient managers of the land and the resources they use from said land.

Despite these challenges, when rural communities are able to effectively establish and enforce equitable land rights for women depending on the land for their livelihoods, “positive impacts on mitigating deforestation, slowing biodiversity loss and the overall conservation of the respective ecosystem begin to occur” (Robinson, 2017, p.2). Moreover, according to a new report released by The Rights and Resources Initiative, “women’s ability to access forests and take part in decision-making regarding resource and land utilization is crucial to conservation and climate change mitigation efforts. They play a vital role in their communities by gathering and producing food resources, preserving traditional, biodiverse crops and resisting abusive exploitation or expropriation of their lands” (Tauli-Corpuz, 2017, p.17). This evidence demonstrates that, because these women have a deep understanding of and connection to the interdependent ecosystems which they inhabit, it is apparent that their secure land tenure rights (and subsequent conservation efforts on said land) are key to mitigating climate change in their respective communities.

That being said, women’s ability to secure their full tenure rights and participate in resource allocation decision making processes is not only vital to climate change adaptation efforts- it also contributes to economic development at both community and national levels.

### **Economic Security Considerations**

There is a broad cadre of research to indicate that a family’s existing poverty-based vulnerabilities are often perpetuated by the barriers women face in direct access to land and agricultural inputs. An FAO research study carried out in Ghana compared male and female farmer output of corn and maize in throughout the country. The study found that “while women were as efficient as men in production, they earned lower yields and profits because they could not gain the same access to inputs like land rights, animal labor, fertilizers and the like.

Subsequently, it is estimated that increasing the input on women's plots, along with gaining their individual titles, could increase overall output by 10-20 percent" (Udry, 2011, p.22). While the primary geographical and cultural context of this study is focused on India, these output losses surrounding the same phenomenon in Ghana are worth noting, as women farmers throughout India also have reported similar problems resulting from barriers to decision-making bodies and lack of access to inputs.

In further emphasizing this point, one article from *The Journal of Land and Rural Studies* examining the linkages between women's insecure land rights, and their economic well-being, demonstrated how "in the state of Bihar, our research findings show that those women who are less likely to have secure land rights are also less likely to have relatively less social and political power in villages, and are therefore less likely to invest in land fertility. This phenomenon can be attributed to women's substantially lower profits per hectare (compared to men) and the heightened risk that women facing having their land expropriated" (Samanta, 2016, p. 1). It is clear that these issues with access tend to lower productivity, and could be costing the Indian national economy millions of dollars in lost output.

Many of these vulnerabilities could be reduced, and consequently, potential economic gains could occur, if women's land rights were more widely enforced and normalized. One national program in India, for example, worked to certify community land rights and provide clearly documented land rental options, to ensure that the leasing of land would be easier for women farmers. As a result of these longer-term rentals, women farmers who participated in the post-intervention survey stated they experienced increased agricultural productivity and improvements in their household incomes. (Namubiru-Mwaura, 2014). Programs and reforms

like these can put women's land rights on an equal footing with those of men, increasing ownership of assets, financial independence and economic gains overall.

Alongside the importance of investing in women's land tenure security for economic prosperity, there is a clear, interconnected relationship between advancing women's land ownership rights and positive impacts on a community's overall health and socially-based outcomes.

### **Health and Community Security Considerations**

Land is usually a rural family's main asset, and its ownership determines the equality of opportunity, including the ability of parents to withstand sudden illness, plan for their families and invest in their physical and emotional well-being (as well as their children's). According to another FAO study done of Indonesian power dynamics within households, "power relative to that of women's husbands found that addressing power relationships within households—which can be most easily influenced by strengthening women's ability to own assets, including land—can have effects that go beyond the purely economic sphere. Women's ownership of at least 25% of household assets was found to be a significant factor in their capacity to make autonomous reproductive health decisions, limit the number of children, and use prenatal and delivery care" (Beegle, Frankenberg, and Thomas 2001, p.15). Bina Argawal, a leading researcher in the WLR movement in Southeast Asia, points to similar patterns throughout India in regards to women's inheritance land rights and their bargaining power, their ability to plan the number of children they wish to have and their overall autonomy. (Argawal, 2002).

Beyond nutrition and health outcomes, one article discussing the impacts of gender equitable land rights from the *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* indicates how empowering single women's fight for land rights can have positive ripple effects in shifting

the male-centric allocation of land and resources to a more equitable paradigm. The article points to an initiative called the ENSS (or the Association of Empowered Single Women) in Himachal Pradesh, northwest India. The ENSS initiative appeared to explicitly challenge both women's dependent status and the stigma against widows and single women, in that it demanded resources and new structures that would enable single women to subsist outside marriage. "The demands from these single women- free health care, individual registration in local council registers, ration cards—are crucial markers of individual identity. The ENSS members also received a range of government programs and resources, and their resulting grant of two acres of state-held agricultural land helped them to meet their basic food needs. While this is in part simply a practical measure, such measures challenge the hetero-patriarchal basis of access to land in north India. Since women living outside the protected status of heterosexual marriage are automatically suspect, the new household relations are also intended to enhance single women's community status" (Jacobs, 2014, p. 18). In using land tenure rights as a platform to demand securing other rights- such as access to government services, land subsidies and health care- programs like ENSS are clearly demonstrating how securing a woman's right to her land can help destigmatize certain harmful cultural norms, lead to improvements in health and heighten women's autonomy and positions within their communities.

Bina Argawal has also implemented a number of evaluative studies that show how endowing women with land can enhance their ability to "challenge existing power relationships, and change social and political gender inequities. An illustrative example of this was a case study of women's experiences in the Bodhgaya struggle in Bihar (eastern India). Here, in the late-1970s, women and men of landless households jointly agitated for ownership rights in the land they cultivated. During the movement, women demanded independent land rights, and received

them in two villages, with marked implications. In the villages where men alone received titles, women's insecurity grew, with an increase in men's tendency to threaten wives with eviction in situations of domestic conflict. But where women got titles, they graphically described their feeling of how they now felt they had the ability to assert themselves not just within the home, but in the community and at customary village council meetings as well" (Argawal, 2002, p.7).

As evidenced in these studies, women's bargaining power resulting from their land ownership rights can translate into not only a redirection of resources into education, health and nutrition, but can have significant positive impacts on empowering women to exercise their rights in decision-making processes and forums as well.

In exploring the connections between efforts put forth by WLR practitioners in India, and the positive changes that can come as a result of these activities, the following section of the literature review will discuss some of the primary resources (and the backgrounds of the authors involved in creating said resources) as a foundation for the results section of the paper.

### **Resources Reviewed for Best Practices Results**

If the interventions designed and implemented by practitioners within this field are to be successful, researchers conclude that these interventions must include research, advocacy, outreach and MEL endeavors into their efforts. These four thematic areas should be integrated, in simplified terms, to uncover the state of WLR in the local context, assess the needs of the local community, utilize the local expertise of the stakeholders involved and evaluate the impact of the interventions in question. As many actors are involved in the WLR movement in India, this review will attempt to highlight a few the notable sources for best practices experts have put forth in the field. While these sources may have highlighted fairly successful and replicated practices in one of these four fields (e.g. research, advocacy, outreach and MEL) more than



another, it is worth noting many of the outcomes of these practices cut across other sectors- hence the rationale for compiling them into a review of sources for all four of the thematic areas.

Within the effort to facilitate the exchange of information around the state of WLR in India, and ways to properly address the legal, institutional, political and sociocultural factors affecting WLR in India, numerous researchers have put forth some useful publications, reports and frameworks. To begin with, two leading Indian WLR researchers, Pranab Chodhury and Sejal Dave, have put forth a highly comprehensive background note on the state of WLR in India. The goal of this background note was to “analyze the status of data availability and accessibility around WLR in India, with available information from varying sources, along with an assessment of the data to monitor the efforts in alignment with the UN SDG goals” (Chodhury & Dave, 2016, p. 1).

Another key resource utilized in uncovering notable practices for effective WLR interventions was Landesa’s *Women’s Land Tenure Security Framework*. According to their website, Landesa is “a nonprofit organization that partners with governments and local organizations to secure legal land rights for the world’s rural and indigenous populations” (Landesa Website, 2018, What We Do Page). Landesa’s framework provides a highly nuanced foundation for assessing the elements that contribute to women’s land tenure security, while simultaneously putting forth ideas for interventions that can be tailored to the unique context of those employing the framework.

In addition the above toolkit, another useful Landesa resource reviewed for this study was an Odisha-based analysis entitled *Land, Assets and Livelihoods: Gender Analysis from Odisha State in India*. This evaluation “examined the key relationships linking land and livelihood strategies, using data collected from the evaluation from two government land titling

interventions, as well as gender-asset dynamics as they relate to household decision making processes” (Peterman, 2014, p.ii). The evaluation also served to highlight an important purpose in the vein of WLR research (which will be discussed further in the results section): the value of implementing a needs assessment within any WLR intervention.

Beyond Landesa’s resources, The World Bank also provided a wide array of useful reports regarding the scope of WLR benefits, barriers, interventions and best practices within the context of Southeast Asia. The first World Bank publication utilized in this study was a report entitled *Land Reforms, Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth: Evidence from India*. This working paper “analyzed the impact of land reform policies in India, using panel household data, together with state-level variation in the implementation of land reform, to address some of the deficiencies of earlier studies” (Odeny, 2013, p.1). This report provided a useful lens in comparing land reform policies state by state, while showing its impact on the accumulation of human and physical wealth, thereby making a strong case for the positive economic correlations for investing in both WLR legislative reform and effective pathways for direct service implementation.

The second World Bank publication that proved highly relevant to researching best practices was an annual conference summary called *Improving Access to Land and Strengthening Women’s Land Rights in Southeast Asia*. This report examined quantitative and qualitative data from studies assessing interventions in areas such as reconciling customary and formal land tenure structures, land tenure policy reform and changing patriarchal mindsets. As the report investigated many of the definitions, factors, best practices and programs discussed in other WLR literature sources, it offered several innovative approaches worth deemed noteworthy

by other researchers in the Southeast Asian WLR movement, which will be discussed later in the findings section of the paper.

Aside from a myriad of international sources, this study also reviewed sources from India based organizations and entities, in order to include expertise from practitioners directly from the respective context. Cited across multiple sources, there are two organizations in particular that are considered to be some of the leading entities in the WLR movement in India: WGWLO and SEWA, both based out of the state of Gujarat. Varying sources of literature seem to agree that the state of WLR in Gujarat is somewhat hybridized, in that it is a mix of both progressive and conservative viewpoints and policies on women's land tenure rights- hence the rationale for selecting these Gujarati-based organizations. According to their website, "WGWLO is a network of over 37 NGOs in Gujarat, working on issues of agriculture and land ownership for women" (Vasavada, 2015, p.1). Moreover, as WGWLO is the force behind The Swabhoomi Kendra Center model (alongside being heavily involved in both direct service implementation and land tenure policy reform in Gujarat and beyond), their publications provide contextually comprehensive insights into the varying legal, economic, sociocultural and political aspects that continue to influence the Indian WLR movement. One WGWLO document in particular, a 2015 policy advocacy briefing (authored by WGWLO Director, Shilpa Vasavada) gave highly specific legislative suggestions from both state and village levels, thereby affording a deeper understanding of how to integrate formal and customary land tenure legal structures.

In addition to WGWLO, SEWA is regarded as one of the principal actors within the WLR movement in Gujarat. SEWA, one of India's most prominent women's cooperatives, has put forth participatory MEL approaches that many researchers regard as highly innovative within the Southeast Asian WLR field. As this study identified multiple sources for effective practices

in research, advocacy and outreach, but far fewer sources in MEL strategies, this particular resource proved to be highly useful.

In addition to the non-governmental Gujarati-based sources, district revenue/land tenure governmental documents were also reviewed. An examination of these sources was required to analyze existing gender-sensitive policies, uncover gaps in implementation and/or identify areas for further reform in alignment with best practice recommendations from other sources.

In considering the contributions all of the aforementioned sources make to the correlative evidence between the impact of WLR on poverty reduction and sustainable development, there are still quite a few areas in which stakeholders need a wider range of information and analysis.

### **Issues Pertinent for Future Study**

While there is a strong case to be made for environmental protection initiatives that incorporate women's land tenure security into their efforts, the results seemed to show mixed results on the impact on conservation outcomes overall. These mixed findings point to the fact that it is important to investigate the correlative nature of the connections between WLR and environmental stewardship, in order to determine the potential success or failure of conservation interventions. According to scholars exploring these relationships, "despite the fact that there is a substantial amount of literature on women's tenure security, the links to implementation are often obscured by jargon and disciplinary boundaries. Yet, for those designing programs working with women's land rights and ecosystem conservation, understanding and addressing land tenure issues are critical for the success of these projects" (Robinson, 2017, p.3).

Notwithstanding the evidence that draws attention to the connection between WLR and bargaining power and inter-generational transfers of credit, there is still insufficient evidence on the associations between WLR and agricultural productivity. Gaps in evidence in the quantitative

data collection, combined with the fact that the content of these empirical works seemed to be based mostly on observational studies, call for further empirical analysis into many of the key pathways discussed in these sources. While the evidence appears strong for relationships between WLR and human capital investment, evidence regarding the connections between WLR and natural resource management, government services and institutions and improvements in livelihoods overall remains slightly more weak. According to *The Women's Land Rights as a Pathway to Poverty Reduction: Framework and Literature Review*, “many of the inconsistencies in WLR theoretical frameworks arise from a failure to account for the complexity of land rights regimes, the measurement of land rights at the household level and the lack of attention paid to gender roles. Moreover, many studies are limited by small sample sizes, the lack of credible counterfactuals, (e.g. gender-disaggregated data regarding land holdings) and few rigorous evaluations of reforms that strengthened women's land rights” (Meinzen, Quisumbing & Thesis, 2017, p.1) While there appears to be agreement that securing WLR reduces gender inequality, the understandings remain limited due to shortcomings in both the quality and quantity of research on these questions. Thus, in working to close these gaps, further research designed to investigate perceived tenure security women experience, as well as the relationships between WLR and poverty reduction overall, is required.

Beyond addressing these mixed results and gaps in research, it is important that practitioners and researchers in this field confront both potential flaws in these kinds of research methodologies and subsequent inconsistencies in the theoretical frameworks, so that areas for future research can be identified and course-corrected. If stakeholders are to properly design gender-inclusive land registration programs, then it is vital to properly define and measure what “tenure security” really encompasses on the ground. While many rely on land documentation and

surveys as proxy tenure security, experts are becoming increasingly aware that they must also assess what perceived tenure security also looks like. According to a World Bank Report, “we need to go beyond simple comparisons of male and female household heads, or their decisions on resource allocation, to understand women’s tenure security. Moreover, women who head their own households are not representative of all women in a community. Perceived tenure security should discuss whether women fear their land will be confiscated; if they are widows or divorcees; their social status/ability to control land independently, and other aspects of perceived security or insecurity” (Namubiru-Mwaura, E., 2014, p. 12).

Nevertheless, these gaps in the evidence should not re-enforce the importance of program evaluators designing studies to close these gaps, and thoughtfully implementing programs and policies that improve women’s land tenure security, and thereby, the livelihoods of their respective communities.

## **Study Purpose and Methods**

With the large number of women reliant on agricultural production as a means of survival, alongside issues in India surrounding poverty, gender injustice, discrimination and illiteracy, it is essential we examine why it is important for rural women farmers in India to have effective and independent land rights; what keeps them from receiving their land claims and what could be done to improve the situation. Therefore, this study sought to uncover whether rural women in India are better able to take care of themselves and their families, thereby contributing more meaningfully to their local economies, when they secure their rights to land. There was surmounting evidence to show women's land tenure security will be key to reducing poverty and conflict; enhancing civil society and promoting economic growth and social stability within India.

## **Study Purpose and Rationale**

In investigating this research hypothesis, the study utilized quantitative and qualitative data regarding the impact of women's land tenure security interventions on communities throughout India through a comparative analysis methodology. The focus of these findings is based primarily on qualitative assessments of literature- while integrating the use of quantitative data, it is not a quantitative evaluation. The study then highlights various best practices from state and national wide efforts to improve women's land ownership rights, and the livelihoods of other relevant stakeholders. The discussion of the salient points from this larger-level intervention analysis then shifts towards findings from a field-based impact assessment and cases study carried out at one Gujarati based organization's women's land tenure security intervention: HDRC's SBK Center. The purpose of this comparative analysis was to examine whether or not practices put forth by practitioners resonate as effective with community members, women

farmers and other stakeholders on the ground, and thereby have the intended positive impacts put forth.

Subsequently, the research aims to be a deliverable for HDRC's SBK Meghraj Center. A collection of best practices, lessons from past efforts and knowledge management utilized within communities of practices can be used to support future efforts, albeit in ideas for new interventions and/or as an advocacy report. Supporting women in their journey not just to receive land titles and productive assets, but to enhance respect, dignity and economic gains in their lives can be a long and arduous process. Any organization planning and implementing efforts in these areas should put the expertise and suggestions of the community it serves (in this case, the women farmers of Meghraj) at the forefront of its work. Engaging with stakeholders directly about the various legal, social and administrative barriers they face on a daily basis is crucial if these programs are to carry out the inclusive approaches it touts on paper. Moreover, in holding officials and women's land tenure activists accountable for gender sensitive compliance of formal and customary land tenure and agricultural policies, plans developed for future advocacy efforts and participatory evaluations should continually improve upon and expand these efforts- hence the rationale for this study.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology applied synthesized data from both primary and secondary data sources, as well as a variety of analysis techniques and field-based research practices. A mixed methodology approach of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data was utilized in (a) analyzing the state of WLR in India (b) evaluating best practices in advocacy, research, MEL and outreach (c) highlighting correlative evidence to support equitable access to women's right to land and other productive assets in connection with improving communities' livelihoods



within the respective region and (d) examining the benefits, challenges, gaps in implementation and recommendations women farmer members/other SBK Meghraj Center members spoke to in the KIIs and FGDs of the study.

### *Secondary Data*

A desk review of academic journals, organizational and government documents analyzed some the contextual background of gender-disaggregated data of land holdings within India. The desk review also explored four different thematic areas for the notable practice selection: (i) planning through research (ii) engaging through advocacy (iii) reflection through MEL and (iv) sharing through outreach and capacity building.

### *Primary Methods*

The selection of participants for both the Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions within the study were carried out by the primary researcher, along with HDRC staff, and included SBK staff members, land tenure government officials and women farmer members of the center. The KIIs were designed to gain insight on what aspects of the HDRC, formal and customary land tenure law implementation and sustainable agricultural approaches were effective; which interventions could be improved or streamlined and tease out the thoughts, feelings and impacts of the movement on both individual and collective levels. These perspectives were collected through transcriptions of in-person, one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with women farmer members of the center, HDRC and SBK Meghraj Center staff, and Meghraj district land tenure government officials, discussing the various positive impacts, remaining challenges and potential recommendations put forth by these stakeholders. Oral consent was given prior to the interviews (**see Annexes 5, 6 and 7 for the oral and/or written consent process distributed**).

## Conceptual Framework/Design

As previously stated, the framework of this study is one of comparative analysis: (i) a macro-level examination of the state of WLR in India, as well as best practices in research, advocacy, outreach and MEL from state and national wide efforts to improve women's land ownership rights, and the livelihoods of other relevant stakeholders, and (ii) a micro-level investigation of findings from a field-based impact assessment and case study carried out at HDRC's SBK Meghraj Center. This framework was conceptualized based on a compilation of papers developed by the primary researcher, oral testimonies and sources analyzed throughout the literature review.

The macro-analysis component was developed partially in reference to Landesa's *Women's Land Tenure Security Framework*. This toolkit offered a particularly useful lens of thematic areas as a pathway for organizing findings. (Hannay & Scalise, 2013). It's concept of breaking down Landesa's intervention recommendations into the discrete elements of planning, engaging, sharing and reflecting offered fitting entry point through which to frame the best practices uncovered within this study (e.g. research, advocacy, outreach and MEL). Furthermore, the micro level case study component was employed as a way to provide a more tangible representation of whether or not the practices laid out in the aforementioned macro-level analysis positively impact beneficiaries and stakeholders in actuality (as opposed to theoretically).

In addition to Landesa's framework, one theory that proved particularly relevant to identifying best practices was Kaufman's needs assessment model. An influential figure for thinking strategically about planning for public and private sector organizations, Kaufman developed an approach for "discussing what a program or community truly needs by working with them to identify gaps in outputs or outcomes before an intervention is put forth. Only then

can a means be sensibly selected for moving from current to desired results” (Kaufman, 2008, p. 2). Kaufman’s level of planning for an organization’s ability to indicate a relationship between the importance of a community expressing what they need before any interventions are put forth. According to the literature, many WLR practitioners seem to be in agreeance that a needs assessment was a component key to the success of any intervention in the field.

Beyond these theoretical frameworks and toolkits, the findings synthesized from the macro level analysis were compiled from a desk-based literature review, which included (but is not limited to) sources such as governmental reports; civil society organization reports, toolkits and frameworks; scholarly journals and articles written by practitioners and leading researchers within the Indian WLR movement. The evaluative research study utilized for the case study was designed as an impact assessment examining the effectiveness of HDRC’s SBK Center in Meghraj, India. The impact assessment employed a mixed-methodology approach, collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. The goals of this impact assessment were three-fold: (i) to examine quantitative data regarding the status of land tenure claims filed and processed (ii) to create an organic dialogue exploring the impacts of said interventions on beneficiaries’ livelihoods, both socially and economically, as well as the challenges faced throughout the process (iii) to bring to light the most critical points of consideration for any future planning of the SBK Meghraj Center’s interventions.

In further elaborating upon the basis for this conceptual framework’s “macro and micro analysis” design, the key WLR dimensions laid out in this study- such as economic empowerment and land tenure security- should be defined, as it is highly important to determine how these theoretical dimensions are conceptualized. To begin with, given the dominance of economic thinking within the World Bank, it is one of the primary agencies that explicitly adopts

the language of women's land rights in reference to furthering economic empowerment. The World Bank defines women's economic empowerment as "a way to make markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in markets (at the agency level). From the point of view of gender advocates within the Bank, this definition, with its clear focus on economic sectors (such as land, labor, productive assets and financial markets) has the advantage of giving gender issues more traction institutionally" (Namubiru-Mwaura, 2014, p.3).

Apart from utilizing the World Bank's theoretical definition of economic empowerment, Debabrata Samanta (a leading researcher in the Southeast Asian women's land tenure security movement) defines land tenure security as a "a relationship between land and people, as individuals or groups, legally or customarily, that reduces disputes, conflicts and the vulnerability of populations on said land, and makes the transfer and use of land more efficient, equitable and sustainable for those inhabiting it" (Samanta, 2016, p.2). These theoretical definitions give a frame through which the research question laid out in the hypothesis should be answered- are the efforts and practices put forth strengthening women's legal status and rights, and ensuring their voice, inclusion and participation in land and economic decision making occurs?

### *Materials and Procedures*

In creating a comprehensive impact assessment for the SBK Meghraj Center, the aforementioned mixed-methodology approach included the implementation of a variety of activities. To better understand the multi-dimensional contexts of the study's focus, HDRC and SBK Meghraj Center reports, papers and articles were reviewed. These sources included HDRC's annual reports and research papers discussing the state of WLR in Gujarat; published WGWLO papers, impact assessments and learning documents and SBK Meghraj Center land

claim status records. Scholarly texts discussing the political, sociocultural and economic historical perspectives of Gujarat were also reviewed. The primary researcher also attended workshops, lectures and presentations regarding formal and customary Gujarati land tenure law, the caste system and the history of marginalization of women and indigenous communities throughout the state.

While the review of relevant organization-based literature/study of the local context was integrated throughout the duration of the study, a FGD was then carried out (with women farmers working with the center) about one month into the study's timeline. The FGD made use of oral consent forms, questionnaires, an audio-recording device (with oral permission to record given from participants), a hired translator, a portfolio with the written FGD questionnaire and a notebook/pen for recording responses and observations.

Subsequently, interviews with key informants (such as SBK Meghraj Center staff, HDRC staff and district land tenure government officials) were also executed. These interviews utilized the same materials as mentioned above, in addition to recording responses and observations with a personal laptop device.

### *Participants*

Participants from the HDRC's SBK Meghraj Center Impact Assessment & Research Study were identified as key stakeholders and/or beneficiaries within the center's efforts. These participants included:

- A sample of eight Adivasi (tribal) women farmer beneficiaries for the FGD
- Two land tenure government officials:
  - The Talati for the Meghraj Taluka
  - Ministry of Rural Development Official for the Meghraj Taluka

- Two SBK Meghraj Center PLWS:
  - The Land Ownership & Varsai PLW
  - The Sustainable Agricultural Techniques PLW
- The SBK Meghraj Center Project Manager (employed by HDRC)

### *Sampling Design*

Participants selected were chosen in a convenience sample of 13 individuals. The beneficiaries who participated in the FGD were recruited by both HDRC and SBK Meghraj Center staff members. As the SBK Meghraj Project Manager and the two PLWs were the primary individuals carrying out the center's activities, they were considered to be key informants in better understanding the effectiveness of the interventions in question. Finally, district land tenure government officials were included in the sample due to the fact that they are not only processing claims and implementing gender-equitable land tenure systems, but could be considered primary allies and stakeholders in working to improve the center's impact.

The interview questions posted to key informants and other participants were designed to uncover information regarding the effectiveness of the center's efforts, as well as existing challenges stakeholders still faced, and any recommendations said participants wanted to put forth on ways to improve the center's success. In surveying the beneficiaries, the interview questions covered topics such as their access to income and other productive assets; the impacts of their HDRC center membership within their household and their overall feelings regarding the interventions. The KIIs with the HDRC staff and PLWs examined which aspects of the services offered they deemed successful, and ways in which they could be made more efficient or accessible. There were also questions regarding their views on the biggest barriers that prevent women accessing their land ownership rights. Finally, for the KIIs with the land tenure

government officials, there were questions identifying how existing pieces of legislation provide women land ownership rights, and what the current processes are in the implementation of land titles at the ground level.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was received from the Institutional Human Subjects Research Review Board at the SIT Graduate Institute to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from human subjects and implement this research study overall. Additionally, oral permission and consent for participation in research was obtained from all of the SBK Meghraj Center participants and informants.

## Results

### Macro-Level Analysis

This section of the paper will provide a macro-level analysis of the state of women's land rights in India, as well as notable practices aimed at enhancing women's land rights throughout the country. While the analysis only focuses on a selection of best practices, the purpose of this sample is to facilitate inclusive exchange of opinion and information regarding notable practices and innovations put forth by both governmental and non-governmental among the necessary Indian women's land tenure security stakeholders and practitioners.

### The State of WLR in India

According to FAO statistics from 2008, "women comprise about 28% of the economically active population of India, out of whom about 86% work in agriculture. They account for 32% of the agricultural force" (Udry, 2011, p. 24). Moreover, a combined analysis from the 2010-11 Indian Agriculture Census pointed to the contribution of women in agriculture, with the percentage and size of women's land holdings (see Table 1 below) showing the disproportions in the both the workforce and the nature of their land holding status.

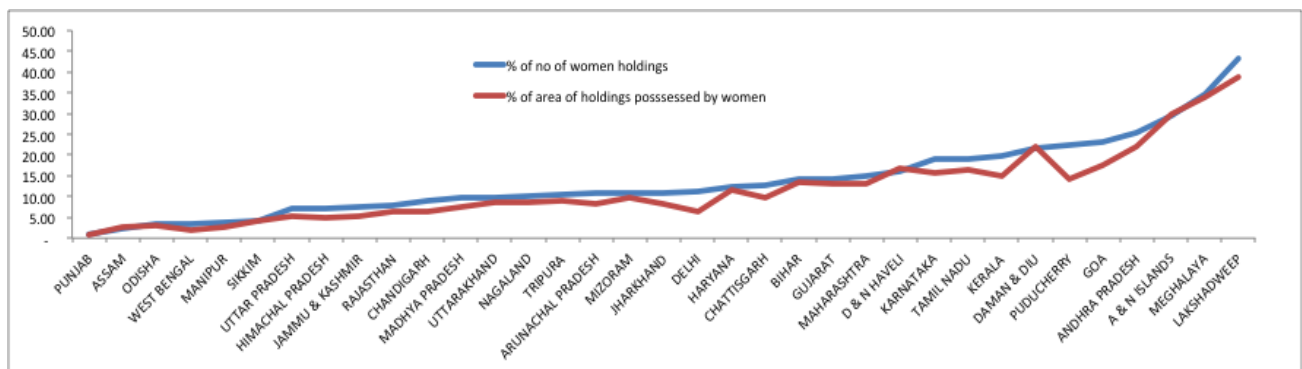
<b><i>Table 1: The State of Women's Land Rights in India</i></b>	
<b>Focus of Analysis</b>	<b>Percentage or Amount</b>
Women who depend on agriculture for livelihoods	86%
Women who own land in their own right	10.34%
Average size of a female's land holding	0.93 hectare(s)
Average size of a male's land holding	1.18 hectares

*Source: Indian Agricultural Census, 2010-2011*



Beyond the observation of the nationwide disparities in the division of labor vs. those women who own land in their own right, the regional and statewide differences women's land tenure security throughout the country were also worth nothing. A comparative analysis of women's land tenure security on a state-by-state level (see Figure 1 below) allows practitioners to see which regions of the country are experiencing positive change, as well as entry points for knowledge management and sharing.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Female Holdings By State**



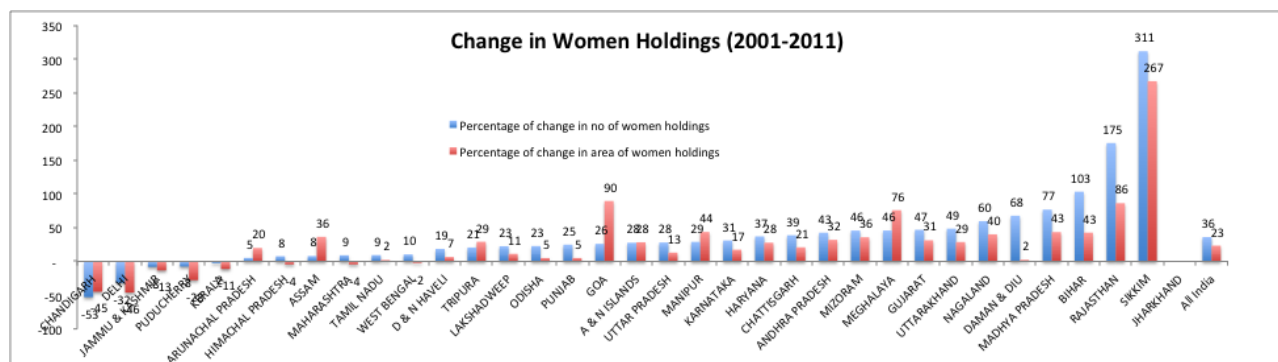
Source: *Women's Land Rights Mapping in India Report, 2016*

According to a 2016 *Women's Land Rights Mapping in India Report*, “the southern states have a comparatively better picture of secure land tenure rights for women, while the central regions depicts a more mixed scenario in terms of gender equity in land rights- some states have larger percentages, while some have smaller sizes of female holdings” (Choudhury, 2016, p.16).

Within the same report, Choudhury examines changing trends in the number of women's land holdings state-by-state over a period of 10 years (see Figure 2 below). As Choudhury points out, “there is an overall increase in the number (36.12 percentage) and area (23.45 percentage) of women holdings in last decade. States like Sikkim, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Daman & Diu are the top five states in terms of percentage increase in area (267, 86, 43, 43 & 2

respectively) and number of women holdings (311, 175, 103, 77 & 68 respectively). In contrast, states like Chandigarh, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Puducherry and Kerala report a negative trend both in terms of percentage change in area (-45, -46, -13, -28 & -11 respectively) and number of holdings (-53, -32, -8, -8 & -3 respectively). Overall, the increase in women land rights is more concentrated in the Western and Southern pockets, and the increase is comparatively higher than the decadal population growth rate, indicating positive movements towards gender equity” (Choudhury, 2016, p.19).

**Figure 2: Changes in State-Based Female Land Holdings (2001-2011)**



Source: Women's Land Rights Mapping in India Report, 2016

While this quantitative data analysis pointed to some positive trends in gender equitable land rights, there was still evident room for improvement in closing the gaps. Thus, it is important to have a conceptual basis for assessing women's land tenure security, and for designing specific interventions to strengthen their land tenure security- hence the rationale for an analysis of notable practices within the Indian women's land tenure security movement.

### **Notable Practices Aimed at Enhancing WLR in India**

Some of the best practices uncovered within the study were explored through the following thematic areas : (i) planning through research (ii) engaging through advocacy (iii) reflecting through MEL and (iv) sharing through outreach and capacity building.

## **Planning Through Research**

As Landesa stated in their *Women's Land Tenure Security Framework*, “implementing a project that is tailored to the local context, that draws on support networks and capacities that are available and that is responsive to women’s stated aspirations and needs regarding their land tenure security requires research” (Hannay & Scalise, 2013, p.19). Thus, this section of the paper will focus on two practices of great value when it comes to researching how to best carry out a given intervention: (i) employing the use of census data sources and (ii) conducting a needs assessment.

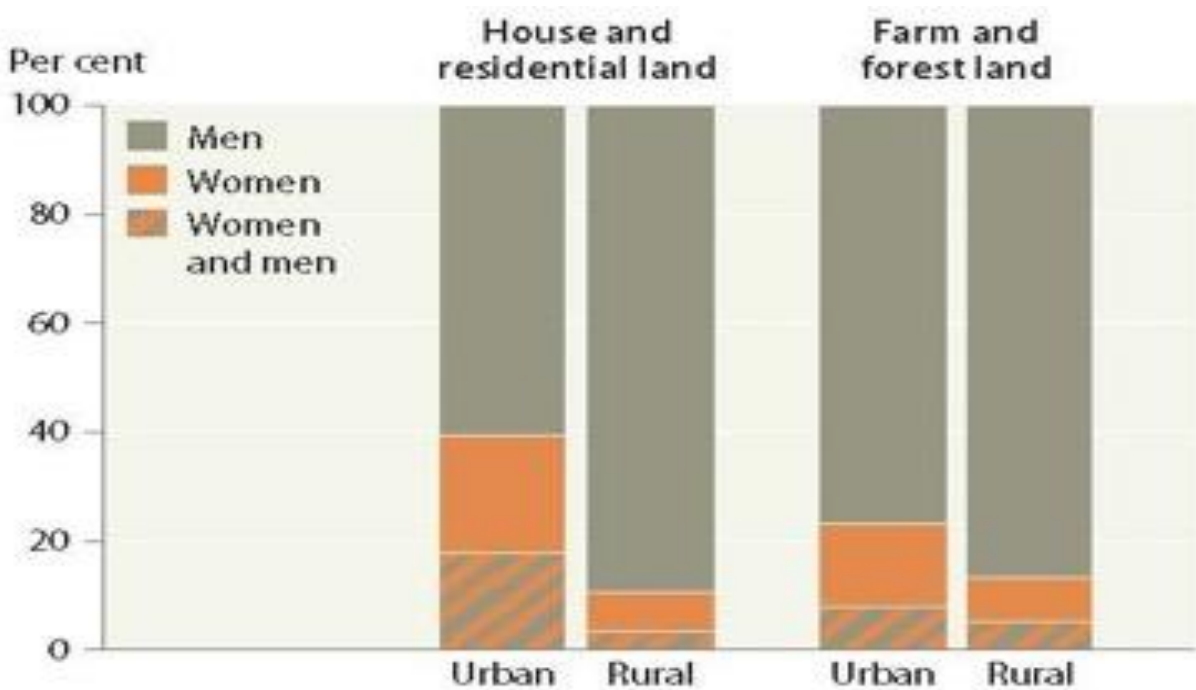
### *Employing the Use of Census Data Sources*

As many Indian states have policies on the books that are meant to uphold equal and non-discriminatory land rights principles, all land census carried out by state governments need to collect gender disaggregated data in order to address where gaps in implementation are occurring. In many states, however, this data collection is not occurring.

While some gender-disaggregated land data exists within different databases, such as the National Family Health Survey, the Population Census, the Agriculture Census and the Socio-Economic Caste Census, each census is carried out at different intervals, (with differing sample sizes) and with a limited amount of information. According to practitioners working to exchange information on the state of WLR in India, “the data collected by these census need to include (but should not be limited to): “the number of women owning land in their own right; the number of women holding positions in land governance structures at all levels- national; district and community levels and the degree of landlessness among women segregated by single women and widows and caste and ethnic group discrepancies” (Choudhury and Dave, 2017).

Despite the fact that the national government is still improving these data collection methodologies, there are some nations that India could look to for gender-disaggregated land holding data collection approaches. For example, Vietnam carried out a 2006 assessment (see Figure 3 below), to examine gender disparities in urban and rural land holdings among men and women throughout the country.

**Figure 3: Distribution of Property Titles by Owner's Gender and Urban/Rural Areas, Vietnam, 2006**



*Source: World Bank Gender Equality & Development Report, 2014*

Visual representations of statistics similar to the one above could be highly beneficial for both governmental and non-governmental entities alike who are looking to close the gaps in gender-equitable land tenure policy implementation.

*Conducting a Needs Assessment*

In working to define the challenges specific to the state or community based context of the intervention in question, it is important to take the time to evaluate the legal, economic, political and sociocultural elements contributing to the lack of enforcement of women's land rights in said region. Thus, conducting a needs assessment that includes activities such as KIIs and baseline evaluations is crucial to planning and implementing effective, relevant and thoughtful programming. According to a Landesa Odisha-based analysis entitled *Land, Assets and Livelihoods: Gender Analysis from Odisha State in India*, "it is important to utilize strategic methods in carrying out an in-depth assessment of the community's specific needs and issues. Thus, baseline surveys and interviews with key informants are a quick way to gather information that provides a high-level picture of the current systems, risks, opportunities and entry points. Overall, the needs assessment is an invaluable practice to implement because it identifies the participants' barriers and aspirations for their land rights, as well as map out community dynamics and stakeholders' roles in impeding or supporting said rights" (Peterman, 2014, p. 78).

The utilization of a needs assessment should be a non-negotiable and a bare minimum requirement component to this process. Any organization working to improve women's land rights should put the women themselves at the center of informing decisions around any intervention planning. This process should include continual discussions with the women, community members and other stakeholders directly about the issues they face, and how they wish to address them. In following through on participatory and inclusive planning for future interventions, needs assessments should ultimately capture the thoughts, feelings, successes and challenges from the respective community members.

### **Engaging Through Advocacy**

As women's land tenure security is a complex issue, understanding how to best advocate for addressing the root causes of the challenges that came up in the planning stages (e.g. family relationships, rules about inheritance and marriage, weakened institutions and lack of awareness) will help to refine a project's specific advocacy objectives, and thus, a more well-developed, action plan. Thus, this section examines three areas of best practices in the realm of engagement and advocacy: (i) creating action plans (ii) co-creating a well-formulated training curriculum with the relevant stakeholders and (iii) integrating policy advocacy.

### *Creating Action Plans*

According to Landesa Framework, *Improving Land Tenure Security for Women: A Women First Approach*, "once you have a clear understanding of the specific challenges women face (as identified in the needs assessment), you want to engage women in a discussion with their groups in which they will identify the causes of each problem, and brainstorm potential solutions that they want to pursue to address those problems. Using these ideas, you will want to develop clear steps for the project to implement with the participant groups" (Hannay & Scalise, 2013, p. 82).

It is, however, important to keep in mind that, while the action steps identified by women are important, at times, they may fall outside the scope of the project. Albeit supplementing in materials or monetary support, some requests simply may not be feasible within the project's parameters. As Hannay and Scalise go on to point out, "it helps to have clear limits, and to clearly define how to engage so project's objectives will remain manageable and achievable" (Hannay & Scalise, 2013, p. 82).

### *Designing a Well-Formulated Training Curriculum*

The development of a well-formulated training curriculum and implementation plan should ultimately be informed by SMART (e.g. specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) targets laid out within the action plan. As the trainings would ideally focus on stakeholders that include customary land tenure council members, land tenure government officials and male and female community members, the curriculum should ensure that an understanding of the implementation of these means and mechanisms within each stakeholder's role is cultivated. According to aforementioned Landesa framework, "the curriculum should be focused on the objective of empowering women, improving community awareness and support of women's land rights, and participating in broader advocacy efforts aimed to influence the policy and practice on women's land rights under formal and customary rules" (Hannay & Scalise, 2013, p. 83).

#### *Policy Advocacy Considerations*

Beyond the scope of action through direct services and interventions, numerous organizations within the Indian women's land tenure security movement cite policy advocacy as a vital component to the success of any Indian WLR intervention. According to a World Bank Report entitled *Improving Access to Land and Strengthening Women's Land Rights in Southeast Asia*, "governments must be held accountable in the development and/or implementation of gender responsive land administration systems that enhance women's participation at all levels, and mainstream gender in land administration mechanisms. Moreover, discriminatory land rights practices can only cease to exist through legal reform and effective enforcement of these mechanisms" (Odeny, 2013, p. 14).

In reflecting upon the specific context of making Indian state and local land tenure policy more gender-equitable, one example that illustrates potential areas to include in a policy briefing

targeted at the local government is a GWLO Report entitled *Policy Recommendations for Improving Women's Land Tenure Security in Gujarat, India*. In establishing clear objectives for effectively changing the Gujarat land tenure policies, some of Vasavada's (2015)

recommendations put forth in the GWLO policy briefing included:

- Developing and maintaining MIS of revenue department with gender segregated data, with reviews of this data performed at regular intervals.
- Ensure greater developmental incentives (loan/ subsidy, inputs, market support) or differential incentives favoring exclusive women landowners or joint landowners.
- Waive stamp duty for transfer of property, exclusively in the name of women to motivate men to transfer/purchase land in the name of women to encourage men to transfer land in the name of women.
- Automatically include names of married woman in the land title of husband with clear title, as joint partners so that they do not have to face problem after death of the husband as also their identity is established as a 'farmer.'
- Ensuring procedural changes and guidelines are enforced, so that daughters/ sisters/ widows do not give away their rights to the fathers/brothers due to social pressure. (p.1)

## **Reflecting Through MEL**

Given that this issue has so many legal, political, economic and sociocultural complexities, it is important to consider the scope of how to best share experiences, strategies and promising practices for assessing change if the movement is to have a transformative impact over the long-term. An institutionalization of these isolated structures and MEL efforts are crucial if communities are to have the information they need to effectively hold their government and customary land tenure officials accountable.

With that, it is important to highlight a selection of qualitative and quantitative MEL models that could be utilized in to properly assess progress within this movement. The following approaches have been implemented by multiple Indian women's land tenure security initiatives, and are put forth as "best practices" by much of the available literature examining the women's land ownership movement.



### *Gender-Sensitive Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)*

Across a variety of projects focusing on women's land tenure security throughout India, gender-sensitive KIIs and FGDs were denoted as a primary tool for M&E data collection and analysis (both at base-line and end-line stages). Organizations like WGWLO pointed to the use of KIIs and FGDs as a participatory way to foster an organic dialogue of emerging ideas with those who have the most informed perspective on the issue (Vasavada, 2012). While KIIs and FGDs can be an affordable way to create the conditions for inclusive planning and learning, it is important to note that systematic analysis of a large amount of qualitative data can be time consuming, and there is always the possibility of bias or pressure (both from the interviewer and informant perspective).

### *Promoting Land Use Action Plans and Social Maps*

Beyond whether women have acquired titles, or other forms of comprehensive rights to their land, ensuring the land reform results in a significant and positive impact on income growth and the accumulation of human and physical capital is a critical part of the process. Thus, many village and district land governance institutions, as well as individual rural male and female farmers, have turned to land use planning as a way to effectively and equitably manage land resources and respect WLR. These customized, village-based land use plans are meant to “foster the optimal utilization of limited resources and is sustainable in addressing the social, economic and environmental considerations for the communities developing them. Moreover, these land suitability assessments and preparation for sectoral plans account for key areas including, but not limited to: gender equity across rural, agriculture, industrial, environmental and transportation sectors” (Deininger and Nagarajan, 2007).

Another tool that can either be paired with the land use plans (or used separately) is a natural resource and/or social map. These maps identify assets such as access to land tenure, new credit, or other social characteristics, that provide a visual, baseline image of a village's conditions that are easy for all villagers (even those who are illiterate) to understand. Another Gujarati based organization, The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) "utilized this tool to allow community members to inform their decision-making roles at the village level, while simultaneously gathering the information necessary to keep their plans on track. These maps are valuable tools for tracking the physical and social changes in the village over time" (Foster & Mathie, 2005, p.16). For example, if individual women in particular households in an area were not receiving their land titles, these maps can illustrate potential pathways for gaining greater access to land tenure support services. These pathways can include (but are not limited to) "collective transportation to district offices, relocating or opening new government land tenure offices, and ways to decentralize land tenure mechanisms for increased land tenure security overall" (Foster & Mathie, 2005, p.16).

### **Sharing Through Outreach & Capacity Building**

While integrating lessons from the research, policy advocacy and MEL efforts are essential components to any WLR intervention, these thematic activity areas alone are not enough to secure women's access to land. The effectiveness of laws depends on awareness about them, the capacities to invoke them and to what extent cultural norms and traditions are practiced and followed instead of formal laws. Thus, this section outlines best practices for supporting the capacity and awareness building efforts of those responsible for those distributing or overseeing land rights implementation on the ground. According to several sources of best practices in

Indian women's land tenure security, some of these outreach and capacity building practices could include:

- Create the conditions for more gender-equitable land titling and registration, land surveying, distribution and land management institutions and programs, and prioritize efforts to give local and traditional leaders, officials and other stakeholders the tools and information necessary to protect women's rights to land (SIDA, 2008; Odeny, 2013).
- Local, regional and national advocacy programs and forums should be implemented by governmental entities, state-based coalitions and networks and rural women's organizations, in order to properly address the socio-economic issues related to women's equal access to and control over land (Odeny, 2013)
- Employ Community Based Facilitators (CBFs) or Resource Persons to ensure women receive training on the content of their rights under customary and formal law, while simultaneously acquiring the skills needed to exercise said rights. These CBFS tend to have deeper relationships with community members, as well as the local expertise necessary to thoughtfully discuss issues and troubleshoot strategies and solutions to foster awareness around the importance of WLR (Hannay & Scalise, 2013)

### **Micro-Level Analysis: SBK Meghraj Center Impact Assessment Findings**

This section of the paper will provide a micro-level analysis of one particular organization's efforts to improve women's land ownership rights in Meghraj, India: HDRC's SBK Meghraj Center. This analysis will utilize findings from HDRC's SBK Center 2018 Impact Assessment (carried out by the primary researcher this past spring) as a case study analysis. Employing a more anecdotal analysis of a current initiative on the ground in India will provide opportunities to highlight some of the more tangible legal, institutional and socio-cultural

challenges and opportunities women face towards the realization of securing their land tenure rights. The findings from this research study and impact assessment will be broken down into four thematic areas: (i) a quantitative data analysis of outcomes of the SBK center's impact on the FGD participants' land holding status (ii) positive economic and social impacts (iii) current economic and social challenges and (iv) recommendations put forth by the study's participants.

The purpose of this micro-level, impact assessment analysis is to ensure that the recommendations and interventions put forth by practitioners within the aforementioned macro-levels truly align with what stakeholders are experiencing on the ground, and to potentially illuminate lessons learned, gaps in services and pathways for overall course-correction.

### **Population Background**

This study worked with a sample of community members who are either members of or stakeholders working with the SBK Meghraj Center, in the state of Gujarat, India. Meghraj is a census town located in the Aravalli district, located a few hours' drive just outside the urban center of Ahmedabad, the capitol of Gujarat. (2011 National Census) The state of WLR in Gujarat reflects a similar pattern that occurs throughout the rest of the central part of the country. According to a study conducted by GWLO in 2013, "23 villages in Gujarat showed that, while 4,188 men owned land, only 561 (or 11% of the population sampled) women owned land. This indicated that, despite positive economic indicators in Gujarat, the percentage of women's land ownership remains very low" (GWLO, 2014, p. 8).

In regards to the population the SBK Meghraj Center serves, the SBK Meghraj center works primarily with those identify as Adivasi, which is the collective term for the indigenous peoples of mainland South Asia. Every FGD participant surveyed within this study identified as Adivasi. According to a 2011 census, Adivasis make up 8.6% of India's population. (2011

National Census) In many cases, Adivasi populations are discriminated against when it comes to access to adequate educational, land tenure, housing or health care opportunities, and are often socio-culturally marginalized as well.

### Quantitative Data Analysis

While highly limited in its scope, the table below lays out the status of claims filed vs. processed by the FGD participants within said impact assessment.

**Table 2: 2018 SBK Meghraj Center FGD Case Statuses**

<i>2018 SBK Meghraj Center FGD Case Statuses</i>			
Details of cases	Total Number Surveyed in FGD	Percentage of Cases Resolved	Percentage of Cases Still Pending
Varsai Title	8	63%	37%

While the following sections discuss the qualitative observational data regarding the positive impacts, challenges and recommendations in more thorough detail, the table below lays out a synthesis of the impact assessment's major findings:

**Table 3: 2018 SBK Meghraj Center Impact Assessment Major Findings**

<i>Positive Impacts</i>	
<i>Economic Impacts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in Savings from Sustainable Agriculture Trainings (and Resulting Preservation of the Local Ecosystems)</li> <li>• Improvement in Budgeting Skills</li> <li>• Access to New Markets</li> </ul>

<b><i>Socio-Cultural Impacts</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Self-Esteem and Community Involvement</li> <li>• Influencing Family Decision Making Processes</li> <li>• Increased Respect Among Village and Other Community Members</li> <li>• Enhanced Interest Among Other Women Farmers (Outside the Beneficiary Base) from Witnessing Participants' Benefits</li> <li>• Exercising Leadership by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Raising Awareness</li> <li>○ Pushing Back Against Bureaucracy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b><i>Positive Impacts Connected to Government Officials</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Clear Deficit</li> </ul>

<b><i>Challenges</i></b>	
<b><i>Economic Challenges</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Stated Evidence</li> </ul>
<b><i>Socio-Cultural Challenges</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Women's Awareness Around Their Right to an Individual Land Title</li> <li>• Lack of Support from Family Members (Males in Particular)</li> <li>• Issues with In-Laws Specifically</li> <li>• Physical Abuse and Pushback</li> <li>• Widows Are Particularly Vulnerable</li> <li>• Major Need for Continued Outreach</li> </ul>
<b><i>Governmental Challenges</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme Lack of Accessibility of Talatis and Mamlatdars</li> <li>• Lack of "Easy-to-Understand," Streamlined Application Processes</li> <li>• Overall Problems with Policy Implementation, along with A Tendency Towards Dominating or Discriminatory Mindsets</li> </ul>

<b><i>Participant Recommendations</i></b>	
<b><i>Swabhoomi Kendra Center</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness Campaigns Around Changing Social Biases, Including More Home Visits</li> <li>• Hiring More Paralegal Workers and Staff</li> <li>• More Accessible Information Around Rights and Processes</li> <li>• Continuing Improve Access to Markets and Credit</li> <li>• Registering SBK Volunteer Leaders from Each Village as a Community Based Organization (CBO)</li> </ul>
<b><i>Government Processes</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Localized Land Tenure Offices, and Support When Visiting Offices</li> <li>• More Consistency in Land Tenure Officer Schedules</li> <li>• More Efficient, Transparent and Responsive Application Processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resolving complexities and Sequencing of Procedures</li> <li>○ Widow Pensions</li> <li>○ Tracking Application Status</li> <li>○ Access to Records</li> </ul> </li> <li>• More Gender Inclusive Political Candidates</li> </ul>

## **Positive Impacts**

### **Economic Impacts**

There is clear evidence to support that the HDRC SBK Center is in the process of improving several aspects of the economic situation for its beneficiaries. Many of the women farmers interviewed stated they saw progress in their ability to budget; had access to new wholesalers and agricultural markets in Mumbai and saw an increase in savings from the sustainable agricultural trainings and services they received from the center's staff. Some of the resources that led to said savings included (but were not limited to):

- A seed bank
- Organic fertilizers, such as vermicompost, Amrut Pani or cow manure
- Organic pesticides, such as lemongrass

### **Sociocultural Impacts**

When the FGD participants were asked questions about the overall individual, family and community level positive social and relational impacts, they reported a myriad of internal and external aspects which had improved in their lives, including some improved access to land tenure decision making spaces. While the positive impacts below are worth noting within both the effectiveness of the center's efforts, and in the treatment of Adivasi populations, considerations of marital status, land claim status, the Adivasi identity and implicit biases in participants' responses should also be taken back into context. Those FGD participants who were single, divorced or widowed still cited more struggles than they did positive impacts, and a majority of the responses listed below are a reflection of the participants whose land claim applications had been processed. Nevertheless, the FGD participants did state the following positive changes as ones they experienced after becoming a member of the SBK Meghraj Center.

#### *Individual*

Participants expressed feelings of improved self-esteem, leadership skills, confidence and a sense of purpose in their lives and in their work. Many beneficiaries stated they felt much more informed not only on what their land tenure rights were, but on how to advocate for them and push back against digressive bureaucratic barriers.

#### *Family*



Women farmers in particular expressed how they exercised more assertiveness in influencing family decision making processes (e.g. talking her sister-in-law into sending her children to school).

#### *Village/Community/Governmental*

Consequently, these same women farmers verbalized that they felt a sense of enhanced respect from community members witnessing the benefits of the program/ expressing interest in the program with them. Moreover, one of the SBK Meghraj Point Persons stated that having the PLWs present in the Taluka office has streamlined communication with and accountability of land tenure government officials. This has allowed the PLWs to have a wider reach in accessing new beneficiaries, as many community members come into the Taluka District Office. Subsequently, the government officials seem to be much more cooperative due to this accountability mechanism being much more efficient and localized.

### **Challenges**

#### **Economic Challenges**

Most of the women farmers surveyed in the FGD never explicitly stated that they had experienced increases in income as a result of SBK's efforts. When stated, it was apparent that there were limited and insufficient increases in income actually generated from access to land titles or new markets.

#### **Sociocultural Challenges**

##### *Individual*

Every group of participants interviewed- The government officials, the SBK staff and PLWs, and the SBK Meghraj beneficiaries- stated a lack of easy access to WLR information as one of their primary concerns. Almost every participant pointed to a variety of problems

regarding women's perceptions (or a lack thereof) of their land tenure rights. Some of these problems included (but were not limited to)

- Some women considered themselves to be working a portion of a family member's land, or if they were married, their husband's and/or in-law's land, or that it should to be passed on to their children instead of being in their own name first. Often times, if they tried to question the matter, they experienced further confusion or pushback from family or community members.
- Confusion about the forms of inheritance and land ownership they were able to exercise (e.g. individual title, joint title, Varsai)
- Lack of easy access to the information, albeit from a beneficiary or implementor perspective. Examples of this included:
  - One SBK beneficiary stated she can only become aware of the processes or the benefits when she comes out of the house.
  - One land tenure government official stated that, while the office offers free legal advice, and a panel of advocates and judges there to support the women in this process, many of the women were unaware of this service.

Beyond the beneficiaries stating their issues with access to information and services, widows in particular seemed to face much more magnified difficulties in their journey to secure their land rights. One widow stated relatives would not help her raise her children, or take care of household duties, thereby making it extremely challenging for her to have the time to pursue securing her rights to her land. Moreover, one of the PLWs surveyed stated that her own family questioned her choice to work mostly with widows, as opposed to other groups of women.

### *Family*

Of all the challenges facing the participants surveyed, physical abuse pushback from family members was by far and away one of the most commonly cited problems women farmer members of the center continued to experience. Participants recounted numerous challenging dynamics with family members (male family members and in-laws in particular), such as:

- Family members accusing staff of breaking the family apart
- Family members pressuring women to take their name off the title
- Relatives scolding and beating a woman for leaving her children at home with another relative while visiting the Taluka office.

#### *Village/Community Members*

While the participants discussed challenges with issues like gambling and drinking exacerbating already existing social and economic tensions, they also spoke to direct and indirect issues with village councils and other community members. Some of these issues included council members simply not listening, or providing space for them to participate, in land distribution decision making processes.

### **Governmental Challenges**

#### *Lack of Accessibility of District Land Tenure Government Officials*

Multiple participants stated lack of availability and accessibility of land tenure government officials as one of their primary frustrations. Both the women farmers and PLWs expressed how often travel great distances (on more than one occasion) to meet with the Talatis and Mamlatdars, and when they get there, the officials are not present.

#### *Lack of “Easy-to-Understand,” Streamlined Application Processes*

Both KII and FGD participants stated bureaucratic inefficiencies as a highly discouraging barrier for women in Meghraj working to secure their land rights. Between the confusion around

which type of title to apply for; the difficult logistics of dividing up portions of the land within a Varsai document; the lengthiness of the process and the disorganized nature of the system overall, participants stated that is often times simply too much trouble to apply for the titles.

### *Gaps Between High-Level Commitment and Implementation Practice*

Participants cited most government officials as being highly unreceptive to supporting their applications for various schemes and programs. One Talati stated the major problem was not the policies themselves, but accountability in implementing them. The Talati also stated that, in some cases, when officials are assigned to tribal areas, they view it as a demotion or a punishment. Furthermore, there is rarely follow up on giving priority to tribal land tenure rights. With many tribal areas with so many tracts struggling with border area developments, many government officials do not consider the implementation of policies like The Forest Rights Act or The Hindu Succession Act (which have gender sensitive land allocation stipulations) a priority.

### **Participant Recommendations**

The following recommendations were put forth by participants:

- Awareness Campaigns and Home Visits Focused on Changing Patriarchal Social Biases
- Hiring More PLWS and SBK Meghraj Center Staff
- Making Information Around Rights and Processes More Accessible. Intervention recommendations under this thematic area included:
  - More Taluka-level trainings and workshops
  - Individual village resource centers
- Continuing to Improve Access to Markets and Credits

- Registering SBK Volunteer Leaders as a Community Based Organization for MEL efforts
- More Localized Land Tenure Offices, and Consistency in Land Tenure Officer Availability
- More Efficient, Transparent and Responsive Application Processes

## **Discussion**

### **Limitations of the Study**

It is worth noting the gaps, limitations and areas with insufficient data for this study. These gaps have occurred, in part, due to a lack of time, logistical constraints and the primary researcher's lack of ability to read and speak Gujarati. Some of the data gaps uncovered may be incorrect, as SBK Staff, WGWLO or the PLWs may already be keeping track of this data, and these are simply gaps in the primary researcher's ability to collect said data.

Nevertheless, considerations include (but are not limited to) a small sample size; a lack of gender-disaggregated data regarding male vs. female land holders within the district of Meghraj; undisclosed information due to participants' fears of future pushback, internalized discriminations, the sensitive nature of the questions, overall lack of faith and frustration from the situation; insights that may have been lost in translation, as the primary researcher relied on an SBK Meghraj Point Person to serve as translator for Gujarati-speaking participants; lack of interviews with more male community members and/or family members of SBK Meghraj members; lack of analysis of the government land tenure records within the Taluka office; insufficient number within FGD sample; lack of visual representations of results; gaps in quantitative data (due to time and language constraints), especially disaggregated data regarding the types of title (e.g. inheritance, joint or individual), male land owners vs. female land owners in Meghraj or surveying Muslim, Dalit or other marginalized communities of women who are also farmers and would potentially want to participate in the SBK Meghraj Center.

Due to these limitations, more research, evaluation and direct engagement with the relevant stakeholders is required.

## **Implications/Conclusions**

Given the revolutionary nature of the WLR movement in India, it appears that some major strides have been made in a short amount of time. Between the recent trends in organizations working to foster comprehensive, community-led, women-centered strategies, alongside greater land tenure equality in India improving resource allocation, it is evident that women farmers throughout India are beginning to feeling more empowered and informed of their land rights.

Despite this positive trends, there is, however, significant room to transform mindsets, hold customary and state-government land tenure officials more accountable for gender equitable land distribution/resource allocation and strengthen WLR in India overall. To enhance gender equality in land and livelihoods, changes appear necessary in at least five areas: legally, socially, institutionally, infrastructurally and conceptually.

In speaking to the sociocultural and conceptual areas, numerous stakeholder narratives point to the importance participants of transforming the mindsets of men, community members and government officials to better understand the importance of rural women's land ownership, and why they have every right to be entitled to it. There is still strong male resistance to endowing participants with land, with single women and those interested in transferring land being particularly discriminated against. Apart from a reluctance to give women the most valuable form of rural property, resistance also stems from social practices which determine marriage choices and post-marital living situations, with widows being particularly stigmatized and vulnerable. Many of these customs and social norms continue to obstruct women's claims, and the social practices and notions of male entitlement around ownership and effective control of land, are as striking as it is with law and practice.

In re-iterating this point from reconciling customary and formal legal, institutional and infrastructural standpoints, in many of the cultures of India, there is still a patriarchal mindset behind inheritance. The fact that the land is considered to be the father's or husband's first, and then the women may take a portion of their land, is highly male centric, and automatically puts women in a secondary position. This ideology of female seclusion restricts women's contact with the market, land tenure government officials and other important community members by gendering forms of behavior, public space and private space. It limits knowledge of the physical environment, access to credit and disadvantages women in seeking information on land tenure acquisition processes, new agricultural technologies and practices, in purchasing inputs, and in selling her products (Argawal, 2002).

These territorial gendering of spaces not only reduces a woman's mobility and participation in activities outside the home- it creates implicit biases and issues in implementing gender-equitable land tenure policy on the ground. If we are to think of more radical and effective interventions, it will be critical to shift both intrafamily behavior, the integration of formal land tenure policy with the local, customary structures and the formulation and implementation of policy on a statewide level.

## **Recommendations**

WLR projects in India have an opportunity to address shortcomings of past formal and customary land tenure law implementation by addressing gender in project and policy design, implementation and allocation strategies. Gender considerations in local land rights, governance and resource allocation will aid in economic, health and environmental security, as well as further gender equality and women's empowerment. However, efforts must go beyond simply registering a title under a woman farmer's name, and address gender gaps in other areas in order



to ameliorate societal discrimination and oppression of women. This study puts forth several recommendations that are worth considering for making progress within the WLR movement in India. These considerations for recommendations include: implementing gender-disaggregated data collection methods in state and national land tenure censuses; creating mechanisms to record village-level documentation and accountability processes, for women's land shares; increasing representation of women in local, state and national decision-making bodies; providing governmental and non-governmental, localized implementation of social and economic support for women, including social services, agricultural extension services, widow pensions and more streamlined application mechanisms and exploring the underlying social inequities and power imbalances between men and women, including legal, cultural and practical barriers to rights that prevent women from fully accessing and controlling land resources.

(Argawal, 2002)

## **Reflection of Research on Women's Land Tenure Security and Sustainable Development**

The arguments for strengthening gender equitable customary and formal land tenure structures have never been more compelling. As the secure and equitable land rights of women form one of the key indicators (Indicator 5 under Goal 1) of the post-2015 UN SDGs, women's land tenure security could have a potentially transformational role in India in the achievement of at least four of the 17 SDGs, including ending poverty (Goal 1), ensuring food security (Goal 2), achieving gender equality and empowering women (Goal 5), and making cities and human settlements inclusive (Goal 11). (UN Website, 2015).

The denial of women's legal rights to their land will continue to be digressive to the economic, social, political and environmental security of communities the world over. This study provides evidential support "that the long-term advancement of those societies dependent on the land and agricultural outputs for their livelihoods will rest on the capacity of women to consistently access, use and exercise their rights and control over their land and other productive assets. Much is at stake- but growing awareness of the importance of women's tenure rights, and increasingly collaborative efforts among governments, business actors, civil society, and the development community, reflect the urgent priority of acknowledging and protecting the tenure rights of rural women throughout our global community" (Tauli-Corpuz, 2017).

As climatic conditions continue to change in unprecedented ways and global populations continue to grow, WLR are all the important to ensure continued benefits from these ecosystems, which already help to sustain millions of lives around the world. Women's participation and knowledge in land tenure rights will be essential to protecting vital resources, in order to ensure a balance of social, economic and environmental wide-ranging, multifaceted benefits for their respective communities.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1- Beneficiary Focus Group Questionnaire

School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center

**Title of Study:** *Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India*

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

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**Please answer the questions from this interview as honestly and as best you can. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you have any questions at all, please feel free to ask the primary researcher (Rachel Lubitz).**

- (1) What was the situation for women regarding their access to owning land before joining Swabhoomi Kendra, Meghraj? How about after?
- (2) What kind of support is the paralegal worker providing to you? What more support do you think is required?
- (3) Can you describe the process of inheritance?
- (4) If you have inherited the land, what has been the impact been like for you, both socially and economically?
- (5) Have there been any changes in your relationship with your family?
- (6) Have there been change in relations for you at the community and/or village level?
- (7) During the inheritance process, were there any other kinds of challenges you experienced, and how did you face them? What, if any, were your coping mechanisms?
- (8) Do you have any recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program?

## **Annex 2- Individual HDRC Staff Questionnaire**

**School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center**

**Title of Study:** *Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India*

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

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**Please answer the questions from this interview as honestly and as best you can. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you have any questions at all, please feel free to ask the primary researcher (Rachel Lubitz).**

- (1) What are your perceptions of the situation for women regarding their access to owning land before joining Swabhoomi Kendra, Meghraj? How about after?
- (2) What kind of support are you providing to the women? What other forms of support do you think should be provided?
- (3) Can you describe the process of inheritance?
- (4) If women have inherited the land, what do you think the impact has been like for these women, both socially and economically?
- (5) Have you perceived any changes in the beneficiaries' relationships with their families?
- (6) Have you perceived any changes in relations for the beneficiaries at the community and/or village level?
- (7) During the inheritance process, were there any other kinds of challenges the women experienced, and how did they face them? What, if any, were their coping mechanisms?
- (8) Do you have any recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program?

### **Annex 3: Individual SBK Meghraj Center PLW Questionnaire**

**School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center**

**Title of Study:** Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

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**Please answer the questions from this interview as honestly and as best you can. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you have any questions at all, please feel free to ask the primary researcher (Rachel Lubitz).**

- (1) What changes have happened in your life, as a result of your work with Swabhoomi Kendra?
- (2) What are your perceptions of the situation for women regarding their access to owning land before joining Swabhoomi Kendra, Meghraj? How about after?
- (3) What kind of support are you providing to the women? What other forms of support do you think should be provided?
- (4) Can you describe the process of inheritance?
- (5) If women have inherited the land, what do you think the impact has been like for these women, both socially and economically?
- (6) Have you perceived any changes in the beneficiaries' relationships with their families?
- (7) Have you perceived any changes in relations for the beneficiaries at the community and/or village level?



- (8) During the inheritance process, were there any other kinds of challenges the women experienced, and how did they face them? What, if any, were their coping mechanisms?
- (9) Do you have any recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program?

#### **Annex 4- Individual Land Tenure Government Official Questionnaire**

**School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center**

**Title of Study:** Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

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**Please answer the questions from this interview as honestly and as best you can. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you have any questions at all, please feel free to ask the primary researcher (Rachel Lubitz).**

- (1) What are your perceptions of the situation for women regarding their access to owning land before joining Swabhoomi Kendra, Meghraj? How about after?
- (2) What kind of support are you providing to the women? What other forms of support do you think should be provided?
- (3) Can you describe the process of inheritance?
- (4) If women have inherited the land, what do you think the impact has been like for these women, both socially and economically?
- (5) During the inheritance process, were there any other kinds of challenges the women experienced, and how did they face them? What, if any, were their coping mechanisms?
- (6) Do you have any recommendations for improving the effectiveness for women securing land titles from the current Gujarati land tenure policies?

## **Annex 5- FGD Oral Consent Form**

**School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center**

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

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**Title of Study:** *Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India*

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you may refuse to join, or you may take back your consent to be in the study, at any time and for any reason. Research studies are designed to gain new knowledge, so this new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. If you wish to obtain a copy of this consent form, or to ask any further questions about this study, please contact Rachel Lubitz or Sunita Mendonza at the following phone numbers at any time:

Rachel Lubitz: (+91) 977 369 0150

Sunita Mendonza: (+91) 792 630 4928

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The goal of this research project is to better assess how effective HDRC's Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center is in helping women gain land tenure rights. You are being asked to take part in this research study to gain better knowledge on how to improve the Swabhoomi Kendra's interventions, resources and services. Your experiences can help provide us with knowledge on what you feel is most important for your community in terms of helping you gain titles to your land, and how HDRC can work more effectively with you in the future.

### **How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of several participants in this research study.

### **How long will your part in this study last?**

Your active portion of this study will take place at any point in the time window from February-April 2018. The focus group could take anywhere from 30-90 minutes, depending on how the conversation evolves among you all as a group.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

You are being asked to participate in a simple questionnaire that will address your background, opinions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the Swabhoomi Kendra's services. With your permission, your questionnaire will be recorded in oral and written format. You are not required to answer any question and may feel free to choose not to answer any question for any reason. The questionnaire will consist of 8 questions inquiring about your experiences and attitudes regarding the Swabhoomi Kendra Center.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining knowledge on the impact of Swabhoomi Kendra's services on the communities in which they work. You may or may not benefit from this study.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report of this study or its results. You will be given a number that will replace your real name on all documents. The list, which matches names, will be kept password encrypted on the HDRC staff computers. You must realize, however, that you will participate in a focus group with other participants. We will be asking you all to keep the information discussed confidential, however, there is a chance that another participant may share information outside of the group.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have questions about your rights, you may contact either HDRC or the School for International Training (SIT) Internal Review Board. A committee that works to protect your rights and welfare reviews all research on human volunteers, and they are the SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, without being identified, if you wish, the SIT Institutional Review Board at 1015 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW Washington DC 20003 or by phone at 202-464-6566, or email at Davina.durgana@mail.sit.edu

**Participant's Agreement**

I have read the information previously provided. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

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Participant's Signature  
Date

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Researcher's Signature  
Date

## **Annex 6- HDRC Staff Individual Questionnaire Consent Form**

**School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center**

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

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**Title of Study:** *Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India*

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you may refuse to join, or you may take back your consent to be in the study, at any time and for any reason. Research studies are designed to gain new knowledge, so this new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. If you wish to obtain a copy of this consent form, or to ask any further questions about this study, please contact Rachel Lubitz or Sunita Mendonza at the following phone numbers at any time:

Rachel Lubitz: (+91) 977 369 0150

Sunita Mendonza: (+91) 792 630 4928

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The goal of this research project is to better assess how effective HDRC's Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center is in helping women gain land tenure rights. You are being asked to take part in this research study to gain better knowledge on how to improve the Swabhoomi Kendra's interventions, resources and services. Your experiences can help provide us with knowledge on what you feel is most important for HDRC to do in terms of moving forward to make the interventions of the Swabhoomi Kendra Center more effective, and how you can better serve your beneficiaries, both in direct services offered and in your policy advocacy efforts.

### **How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of several participants in this research study.

### **How long will your part in this study last?**

Your active portion of this study will take place at any point in the time window from February-April 2018. The questionnaire could take anywhere from 30-90 minutes, depending on how you'd like to respond.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

You are being asked to participate in a simple questionnaire that will address your background, opinions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the Swabhoomi Kendra's services. With your permission, your questionnaire will be recorded in oral and written format. You are not required to answer any question and may feel free to choose not to answer any question for any reason. The questionnaire will consist of 8 questions inquiring about your experiences and attitudes regarding the Swabhoomi Kendra Center.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining knowledge on the impact of Swabhoomi Kendra's services on the communities in which they work. You may or may not benefit from this study.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report of this study or its results. You will be given a number that will replace your real name on all documents. The list, which matches names, will be kept password encrypted on the HDRC staff computers.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have questions about your rights, you may contact either HDRC or the School for International Training (SIT) Internal Review Board. A committee that works to protect your rights and welfare reviews all research on human volunteers, and they are the SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, without being identified, if you wish, the SIT Institutional Review Board at 1015 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW Washington DC 20003 or by phone at 202-464-6566, or email at Davina.durgana@mail.sit.edu

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**Participant's Agreement**

I have read the information previously provided. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

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Participant's Signature

Date

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Researcher's Signature

Date



## **Annex 7- Land Tenure Government Official Individual Questionnaire Consent Form**

**School for International Training/The Human Development and Research Center**

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

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**Title of Study:** *Assessing the Impact of the Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center in the Gujarat State of India*

**Primary Researcher:** Rachel Lubitz

**Study Contact Email:** Rachel.lubitz@mail.sit.edu

### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you may refuse to join, or you may take back your consent to be in the study, at any time and for any reason. Research studies are designed to gain new knowledge, so this new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. If you wish to obtain a copy of this consent form, or to ask any further questions about this study, please contact Rachel Lubitz or Sunita Mendonza at the following phone numbers at any time:

Rachel Lubitz: (+91) 977 369 0150

Sunita Mendonza: (+91) 792 630 4928

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The goal of this research project is to better assess how effective HDRC's Swabhoomi Kendra Land Ownership and Farm Information Center is in helping women gain land tenure rights. You are being asked to take part in this research study to gain better knowledge on how to improve the Swabhoomi Kendra's interventions, resources and services. Your experiences can help provide us with knowledge on what you feel are the biggest barriers for women in gaining titles to their land, along with what you feel is most important in supporting women's land tenure rights, and how HDRC can support efforts to ratify or improve current women's land tenure policies.

### **How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of several participants in this research study.

**How long will your part in this study last?**

Your active portion of this study will take place at any point in the time window from February-April 2018. The questionnaire could take anywhere from 30-90 minutes, depending on how you'd like to respond.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

You are being asked to participate in a simple questionnaire that will address your background, opinions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the Swabhoomi Kendra's services. With your permission, your questionnaire will be recorded in oral and written format. You are not required to answer any question and may feel free to choose not to answer any question for any reason. The questionnaire will consist of 8 questions inquiring about your experiences and attitudes regarding the Swabhoomi Kendra Center.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining knowledge on the impact of Swabhoomi Kendra's services on the communities in which they work. You may or may not benefit from this study.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report of this study or its results. You will be given a number that will replace your real name on all documents. The list, which matches names, will be kept password encrypted on the HDRC staff computers.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have questions about your rights, you may contact either HDRC or the School for International Training (SIT) Internal Review Board. A committee that works to protect your rights and welfare reviews all research on human volunteers, and they are the SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, without being identified, if you wish, the SIT Institutional Review Board at 1015 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW Washington DC 20003 or by phone at 202-464-6566, or email at [Davina.durgana@mail.sit.edu](mailto:Davina.durgana@mail.sit.edu)

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**Participant's Agreement**

I have read the information previously provided. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

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Participant's Signature

Date

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Researcher's Signature

Date